

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1938

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT CORRECTED)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINR, PINT, SY

SUBJ: MAHMOUD HADID, PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

1. MAHMOUD HADID WAS ELECTED ON MARCH 30 BY THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL TO FILL THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL LEFT VACANT BY MOHAMMAD ALI AL-HALABI'S SELECTION AS PRIME MINISTER. HADID HAILS FROM A SUNNI WORKING CLASS FAMILY FROM DEIR ATTIYEH BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND HOMS WHERE HE WAS BORN IN 1933. HE IS A STAUNCH BAATH PARTY LOYALIST HAVING JOINED THE PARTY IN ITS EARLY DAYS IN 1952, AT THE AGE OF 19. AT THE SAME TIME HE BEGAN WORKING, AFTER LIMITED FORMAL EDUCATION, IN A TEXTILE MILL AND JOINED SYRIA'S FLEDGING LABOR MOVEMENT. HADID WORKED HIS WAY UP FOR THE NEXT 14 YEARS IN THE BAATH PARTY AND LABOR MOVEMENT IN LARGELY SECRET ACTIVITIES SURFACING IN 1966 WHEN HE WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE PARTY'S DAMASCUS BRANCH COMMAND WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LABORERS' BUREAU. SIMULTANEOUSLY, HE WAS ELECTED SECRETARY OF THE DAMASCUS UNION OF SPINNING AND WEAVING WORKERS. IN 1967 HE WAS SELECTED TO HEAD UP THE PROFESSIONAL UNION OF SPINNING AND WEAVING WORKERS. THE

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FOLLOWING YEAR HE TOOK OVER AS HEAD OF THE DAMASCUS LABOR UNION AND IN 1968 WAS ELECTED DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS (GCLU), WHICH OVERSEES ALMOST ALL LABOR ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION BEING THE PEASANTS UNION. IN 1970 HE BECAME THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GCLU AND FOR SEVEN YEARS HIS HAS BEEN THE PRE-EMINENT NAMES IN THE BAATH PARTY DOMINATED LABOR MOVEMENT IN SYRIA. IN APRIL

1975 HADID WAS ELECTED TO THE THE BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND AND IN 1977 THE COMMAND NAMED HIM TO HEAD UP ITS LABORERS' BUREAU. IN THE PROCESS OF THIS VERY FULL CAREER HADID FOUND TIME TO MARRY A PALESTINIAN AND RAISE EIGHT CHILDREN.

2. HADID HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL SINCE ITS INCEPTION. IN 1971 HE WAS APPOINTED TO THE PROVSIONAL PEOPLE'S COUNCIL AND WAS ELECTED TO SUBSEQUENT COUNCILS IN 1973 AND 1977. HE HEADED UP THE DAMASCUS PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT LIST FOR THE LABORERS AND PEASANTS SECTOR IN THE 1973 AND 1977 ELECTIONS TO THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL AND RECIVED THE GREATEST NUMBER OF VOTES AMONG THE CANDIDATES IN THIS SECTOR. UNLIKE HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES IN THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL HE DID NOT SERVE ON ANY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES IN EITHER THE 1973 OR 1977 COUNCIL. WHILE HADID HAS ATTENDED SESSIONS OF THE COUNCIL, HE HAS NOT BEEN INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN ITS ADMINISTRATION HAVING TO SPEND MOST OF HIS TIME ON GCLU AFFAIRS. THE FUNCTIONS OF HEAD OF THE GCLU AND PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL HAVE MANY ADMINISTRATION AND PROTOCOL SIMILARITIES, HOWEVER, AND HADID SHOULD HAVE THE NECESSARY TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE FOR HIS NEW POST IF NOT THE APPROPRIATE POLITICAL OUTLOOK.

3. HADID IS CONSIDERED A DOGMATIC BAATHI WHO LOOKS TO THE SOVIET MODEL FOR SOCIALISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE HAS FILLED VARIOUS POSITIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ARAB LABOR UNIONS AND REPORTEDLY WAS A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE SOVIET DOMINATED WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS. WHILE RESPECTING THE SOVIET EXAMPLE, HADID SHARES THE BAATHI MISTRUST OF COMMUNISM AND HAS PLAYED A PART IN INSULATING SYRIA'S LABOR MOVEMENT FROM COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. HADID IS MOST CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH MUHAMMAD JABIR BAJBUJ, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE REGIONAL COMMAND WHO HAS FELT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD'S OPENING TO THE WEST AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF A PRIVATE ECONOMIC SECTOR. HADID HAS ALSO BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH BAJBUJ'S ATTACKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER RIFA'T AND WITH SUNNIS ON THE REGIONAL COMMAND WHO RANKLE UNDER ALAWAITE DOMINATION. LABOR UNION MEETINGS UNDER HADID HAVE BEEN NOTEWORTHY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS OVER THE PASY YEAR FOR OUTSPOKEN ATTACKS ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS MOVE AWAY FROM STRICT SOCIALISM.

4. HADID'S NEW POSITION MAY BE SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE FOR HIM. HE HAS BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO DEALING WITH ARAB AND "SOCIALIST" STATES, BUT THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL HAS BEEN USED INCREASINGLY BY THE PRESIDENT FOR SYRIA'S OPENING TO THE WEST. IN ADDITION, HADID COULD LEGITIMATELY QUESTION GOVERNMENT POLICIES AS HEAD OF THE WORKERS, WHEREAS IN THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL HE WILL BE

CALLED ON TO SEE THAT GOVERNMENT POLICIES ARE ENACTED INTO LAW.
IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW MUCH OF HADID'S DOGMATISM HAS
BEEN THE PRODUCT OF DEEPLY HELD PERSONAL CONVICTIONS AND HOW
MUCH HAS RESULTED FROM THE NATURE OF HIS LABOR MOVEMENT
DUTIES. WE ARE TOLD HE IS HAPPY WITH HIS NEW POST BECAUSE OF
THE PRESTIGE AND PERKS THAT GO WITH THE
JOB--HE GETS A HOUSE, A CAR, AND SOMEWHAT MORE ACCESS
TO EXTRA GRATUITIES. IF HADID HAS BEEN COOPTED BY ACCEPTING
HIS NEW POSITION TO PRAGMATICALLY WORK FOR THE PRESIDENT'S
POLICIES, HE COULD EFFECTIVELY HELP BLUNT INTERNAL LEFTIST
CRITICISM GIVEN HIS UNBLEMISHED SOCIALIST AND LABOR CREDEN-
TIALS. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN IF HE DOES NOT THROW HIMSELF FULLY
BEHIND ASSAD'S POLICIES, HIS PEOPLE'S COUNCIL POSITION
GIVES HIM LITTLE SCOPE TO INFLUENCE THOSE POLICIES. HIS
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DOMINANT POSITION IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT WAS POSSIBLY A MORE
POWERFUL POSITION THAN HIS NEW POST, BUT WE ARE RELUCTANT TO
DRAW THE TEMPTING CONCLUSION HE IS BEING KICKED UPSTAIRS
UNTIL WE SEE HOW HE RESPONDS TO HIS NEW POSITION AND WHO WILL
FILL HIS GCLU POST.
PELLETREAU

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